

May 24, 2009

Attn: Ms. Mary Adams  
Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board  
895 Aerovista Place, Suite 101  
San Luis Obispo, Ca 93401

Dear Ms. Adams,

I am writing to you this evening after spending the day wondering why I was having such a hard time starting and finishing what should be a simple comment letter. But then I realized that this could never be a simple comment letter because this is not a simple issue! This issue is bigger than life and in being so I find that I really must start from the beginning.

I attended my first Monterey Coastkeeper meeting the other night and was thoroughly shocked at the state of our waterways. I felt angry and confused and wanted to yell out, "How could this happen! Who is in charge of this? How on earth could this ever have happened?" But instead, I quietly listened to the panel of experts speak of the upcoming impaired listings proposal and the importance of Section 303(d) to people like me, as it is one of the most powerful tools that we have to get our most treasured waterways cleaned up.

At the end of the meeting, I gathered up the handouts and drove home in silence. As I drove through Moss Landing (one of my favorite sights) I remembered that I no longer have to pray not to hit a flying bird anymore and I never see "Hawkman" or "Ege" the Great Egret anymore at all. In fact, just the other day, I drove in to see "Rocky" and his new family (the resident Otters of the Moss Landing Yacht Harbor) and not only were they not there (a good thing too) but there was just one lone Snowy Egret, off in the corner, trying to fish in what looked like red soapy water.

But that was Moss Landing, I live in Capitola and my part of the Monterey Bay Sanctuary is VERY different from what it used to be. In fact, I would say the wildlife sightings have dropped by 65 percent. I know this because I have lived, on and off here for 7 years and my window looks right out onto it (the attached photographs are from 2003 and I can assure you that the birds are no longer here like they show in the photograph). As a matter of fact, I am actually moving from here because my heart is so saddened by what I no longer see. We used to have dolphins jumping, birds flying and otters swimming each and every day. It was an ocean soup bowl of life and now there are only a handful of residents left, Odie the Otter, Sam the Seagull and Salt and Pepper (our resident harbor seals). There is something very different with these waters of late and I can't put my finger on it but I imagine that you can.

As I read the directions for this letter, I can see that this would be the time to list what the beneficial uses are of my local waterways. But I can't help but wonder why? Why should I have to list the importance of our most precious gift of life? I don't have to be a fisherman, swimmer or boater to know that our waterways are what keep us alive both physically and psychologically. Without clean water, we will eventually die (and a terrible death I might add) but not before we have the time to witness the heartbreaking deaths and inevitable extinction of our beloved wildlife partners first.

I guess I just didn't realize the dire state of affairs around here. In fact, when I was living up in Washington State, I remember hearing about the pollution in Puget Sound and I remember bragging about how we would never do that! But now, I plan on eating my words and apologizing to my friends, but I truly never thought, that we would ever let this happen.

In closing, I guess I would ask you instead Mary, what would you say are the beneficial uses of our local waterways? Why are these water bodies important to you? What evidence do you have that shows that these waterways are polluted? Are they the same ones that I have in my hand? If so, then I'm sure that you must agree that this proposal is the right thing to do. If not, then I am pleading with you Mary, please push through this critical proposal to clean up our waterways. There just couldn't be anything more important and you have such pull to get it done.

I want to thank you so much for all your hard work and I really mean that as I have a very dear friend (who is no longer in the business) that worked so hard for clean water and he really made a difference in his area just as I know you do too. I really feel that this and other proposals of this type are our last chance to clean up our waterways before real disaster strikes at the heart of humanity. I know you will make the higher choice Mary and again I want to thank you so very much!

Your Friend,  
Deborah Phelps  
106 Grove Lane Apt 13  
Capitola, CA 95010